

Braemar, Argyle parents: 'We are stronger united'

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An open letter to the parents, students and staff of Argyle secondary:

Dear Neighbours: An intense and uncomfortable conflict has existed between our communities over the past three months.

With the decision by the District of North Vancouver council to reject the rezoning application of Braemar elementary, we hope we can proceed forward and mend fences rather than widen the divide.

We may have opposing views on this issue, but we have a common goal: the well-being of our children and community. We are not your adversaries but rather your friends, colleagues, and most of all, your neighbours.

A lot has been said between our communities during the process and we believe these words have been fuelled by a lack of open and accountable consultation. For Braemar catchment residents, consultation by the North Vancouver School District began and ended in September 2006. We have had no responses from the NVSD to our legitimate concerns over the impact of land sales

while you have been engaged as recently as October 2015. To put it in another sense, all the Braemar students who were in kindergarten at the time of our only consultation are now in high school. A lot has changed in the past nine and a half years, but our opposition to the sale of public lands has never swayed. Regardless of the accuracy of the information you received or the lack of information we received, it is time for a new and constructive dialogue - one that strengthens our community and values.

As a starting point, we know we can agree on three basic facts: 1. Argyle secondary needs to be rebuilt immediately. 2. The responsibility for funding such capital projects is that of the provincial government.

3. Public lands are a finite asset, held by the public for the use of the public.

We understand and support your drive to have Argyle rebuilt. The provincial government has acknowledged 128 schools throughout British Columbia, including several others in North Vancouver, are

seismically unsafe, yet has refused to act. This inaction is unconscionable.

Instead, the provincial government has deferred their funding responsibilities to local school districts; agencies with limited means to raise money. This has led many school districts across the province to sell their limited public assets to make up the shortfall. We oppose such a strategy and worry about what this strategy means for future generations, especially in the face of projected population growth.

We are stronger united than we will ever be divided. Imagine the impact we could have if instead of arguing amongst our neighbours over unpopular proposals, we banded together and sent a very clear message to the provincial government that they can no longer defer their responsibility to the taxpayers and future generations. We will stand with you, shoulder to shoulder, and yell this at the top of our lungs so that our unified voice can echo through the halls of the legislature.

Chris Martin for Braemar elementary catchment parents and residents

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